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Dr. Condoleezza Rice Speaks at Los Angeles Town Hall

Remarks by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice at Town Hall Los Angeles Breakfast Dr. Rice
The Westin Bonaventure Hotel
Los Angeles, California

[In Focus: The Road Map to Peace](#)

DR. RICE: Well, thank you very much for that warm welcome. It's so great to be here at the Town Hall, Los Angeles. I want to thank Liam McGee for that terrific introduction and for his work as vice chair of Town Hall Los Angeles. Adrienne Medawar, the president of Town Hall Los Angeles, thank you for your hard work. And to all of the board members and staff members who make this great organization function, thank you very much.

I see a lot of familiar faces here -- friends from the academy, a family member, a number of long-time friends from California. It's just great to be home -- thank you very much for welcoming me here. (Applause.)

My time as Stanford -- as professor and provost -- provided some of the fondest memories of my career. And, like Stanford, Town Hall Los Angeles thrives on debate and discussion about the great issues of the day. I want to spend a few minutes speaking with you today about an issue that is clearly vital to our time -- promoting peace and progress and change in the Middle East.

The events of the last few months make clear that the Middle East is living through a time of great change. And despite the tragic events of the past few days, it is also a time of great hope. President Bush believes that the region is at a true turning point. He believes that the people of the Middle East have a real chance to build a future of peace and freedom and opportunity.

In Iraq, a murderous tyrant and a supporter of terror has been defeated, and a free society is rising. (Applause.) Coalition troops in Iraq still face great dangers each and every day. Iraq's transition from dictatorship to democracy is proving every bit as challenging as we had imagined. Three decades of tyranny left Iraq worse off than we had imagined.

Saddam's palaces were in very good repair. And years of intelligence and U.N. reports tell us that his weapons of mass destruction programs were robust and well-funded. But Iraq's water and sewer systems and power grids and hospitals and schools all suffer from decades of malign neglect. The psychological impact of decades

of murderous totalitarianism on generations of Iraqis is even worse. Truth was buried with thousands of Iraqis in mass graves that are still being discovered. Trust was imprisoned with children jailed on the capricious whims of a brutal regime.

We are working with the Iraqi people to stabilize their country, to improve security and to make basic services better than they were before the war. But much hard work remains. America and our coalition partners and determined to do the work that we came to do, and then we will leave.

President Bush has stated many times that the battle of Iraq was about moving a great danger, but also about building a better future for all of the people of the region. Iraq's people, for sure, will be the first to benefit. But success in Iraq will also add to the momentum for reform that is already touching lives, from Morocco to Bahrain and beyond.

Last year, in an extraordinary United Nations report, leading Arab intellectuals called for greater political and economic freedom for the empowerment of women, and better and more modern education in the Arab world. In January of this year, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia proposed an Arab Charter to spur economic and political reform. And the proposal speaks openly of the need to enhance political participation. In Afghanistan, people are rebuilding, writing a new constitution and moving beyond the culture of the warlord that has dominated their political life for a generation.

The world has a vital interest in seeing these efforts succeed, and a responsibility to help. As President Bush said, stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder, they encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life. Of course, reform takes time, and it is often difficult. There is no one-size-fits-all model of democracy. New liberties can find an honored place among treasured traditions.

Everyone must reject, nonetheless, the condescending view that freedom will not grow in the soil of the Middle East, or that Muslims somehow do not share the desire to be free. The United States has made clear that we stand with all people in the Muslim world and around the globe who seek creative freedom, greater opportunity.

The President has a comprehensive strategy for the Middle East. He has proposed the creation of a U.S.-Middle East free trade area within a decade, so that people of the region can tap the power of global markets to build their own prosperity. And the President has put the United States firmly behind the creation of a state called Palestine, that is viable, peaceful and free.

Peace between Israelis and Palestinians will not result from the will of a single leader. But as the President said last week, achieving peace in the Middle East is a matter of the highest priority for the United States. We can help the parties, and we will help the parties. But the hardest work must be done by the parties, themselves.

The pictures you saw and the words you heard last week from the Red Sea were historic. I'd like to take a moment to look at the groundwork that led to those extraordinary moments.

Almost a year ago, in his speech on June 24th of 2002, the President laid out a vision for a new Middle East. That vision was clear: two states, Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security. The means to realize that vision were also clear -- and, in fact, a little controversial.

First, and famously, the President called on the Palestinians to bring about new leaders, leaders not

compromised by terror. The old leadership had failed to deliver on the promises to fight terror, but had, in fact, encouraged it and even abetted it. As a result, President Bush believed that new leadership was needed. And because of his faith in the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people, he believed it was possible.

We all had to be patient. But the Palestinians have begun to take their own future into their hands. And they understand the new leadership, that there can be no peace for either side until there is freedom for both sides. (Applause.)

The Palestinian people deserve the same things that many of take for granted every day: the rule of law, economic freedom and democratic institutions, the right to live in dignity. A reformed, democratic Palestine would not only meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people, it's first and most important task, but it would also inspire confidence by Israel that a true partner for peace had emerged in the Gaza and the West Bank.

The President, in that same speech, stressed that there was a need for all sides to meet their responsibilities -- not just Palestinians, but Israelis and Arab states, too. The Israelis must deal with settlement activity, dismantle outposts and ease the daily humiliation faced by ordinary Palestinians. The Palestinians must fight terror and end incitement.

But real progress requires all of us to recognize that there are more than just two parties with responsibilities in this conflict. The Arab states, the neighboring states must be partners in that peace. They have influence with the Palestinians and they must use it to encourage reform and promote peace. They, too, have responsibilities to fight terror and incitement among their own people.

In the 50 weeks since that June 24th speech, the United States has held fast to that vision. The President has sought to bring life to it through engagement with the parties when engagement would help. During that time, he spoke to and met with leaders and all sides. He instructed Secretary Powell to work closely with his counterparts from the United Nations, Russia and the European Union to put together a concrete plan for realizing the vision of two states -- a plan that came to be known as the road map.

At the same time, Arab states were showing a new willingness to support reform both at home and in Palestinian territories. And, of course, new Palestinian leadership did begin to emerge. Mahmoud Abbas -- a man committed to fighting terror, who has described the intifada that began in 2000 as a mistake -- became Prime Minister. He appointed, in turn, a reformist cabinet that included a Finance Minister, the respected Salaam Fayyad, who is already pursuing and transparency necessary to put Palestinian finances in order and to assure that Palestinian resources benefit the people and not the terrorists. And the Israeli government formally endorsed the idea of a Palestinian state located along its borders.

In short, the strategic landscape of the region is vastly different than it was just a little less than a year ago. And this is the backdrop to the pictures and the words that came from the Red Sea last week.

In Sharm el-Sheikh, the Arab leaders rejected terror in the strongest possible terms. They vowed to fight the scourge of terrorism and reject the culture of extremism and violence in any form or shape for whatever source or place, regardless of justification or motivation. They vowed to use all the power of the law to prevent support reaching terrorist groups. And they committed themselves to helping the Palestinian Authority fight terror and to helping Palestinians and Israelis build representative democratic institutions in their own territories. They also committed to a democratic Iraq that would build representative and stable institutions.

As Arab governments put these pledges into place it put a premium now on action. Because words can greatly

aid the momentum toward peace, but only if there is action.

In Aqaba, Prime Ministers Sharon and Abbas declared their commitment to a peace founded on the vision of two states. And they committed to taking tangible steps to bring that peace closer.

Prime Minister Sharon pledged to improve the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian areas and to begin removing unauthorized outposts immediately. He recognized the importance of territorial contiguity for a viable Palestinian state. And he said: it is in Israel's interest not to govern Palestinians, but for the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state.

Prime Minister Abbas recognized that terrorism is not a means to a Palestinian state, but a deadly obstacle to it. He pledged to use his full efforts to end the armed intifada and to work without compromise for the end of violence and terror. He also pledged to make Palestinian institutions, including security services, more democratic and accountable.

Of course, the hopeful picture I've outlined is just a beginning. This week has seen familiar scenes of bloodshed and violence caused by those who would use terror to destroy the hopes of the many for peace. The terrorists will not succeed. This is a time for all who are committed to peace to speak and act against the enemies of peace. President Bush remains committed to the course set at Aqaba because it is the only course that will bring a durable peace and lasting security.

This President keeps his promises. He expects all the parties to keep theirs. (Applause.)

More than four decades ago, President Kennedy spoke of a long, twilight schedule, year in and year out, against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war, itself.

Some champions of these evils have been vanquished, but the common enemies of man remain, and a new enemy -- global terror -- has emerged. The United States is determined to fight this new enemy, knowing full well that final victory will probably not come any time soon.

On September 20th, shortly after the September 11th attacks, the President told the American people that that victory might, in fact, might not even come on his watch. This enemy is different from any we have ever known. Stateless, stealthy, small terror networks can wreak untold damage without warning anywhere in the world. Their strategy is to use wanton destruction and the slaughter of innocents to sow confusion and to hold human progress as a heresy. They have no territory or assets. They cannot be deterred. They have no interests beyond the killing of innocents. They can not be persuaded. They can only be destroyed. (Applause.)

But the fever swamps in which they grow can be drained. The emergence of new networks and new recruits can be prevented. The war on terror is as much a war of ideas as a war of force. To win the broader war, we must win this war of ideas by appealing to the just aspirations and decent hopes of people throughout the world -- giving them cause to hope for a better life and a brighter future, and reason to reject the false and destructive comforts of bitterness and grievance and hate.

Terror grows in the absence of progress and development. It thrives in the airless space where new ideas, new hopes and new aspirations are forbidden. Terror lives where freedom dies.

That is why fighting the common enemies of man is not only the right thing to do, it is the clear, vital interest of the world to do so.

In the defeat of communism and all through the post-World War II transformation of Europe and Asia, America and her allies demonstrated that we can and do stay the course until the work is done. The defeat of global terror and the emergence of a freer, more prosperous and more modern Middle East may also be the work of a generation.

At this time of hope and promise, we and those who share our values must work together to create a world where terror is shunned and hope is the provenance of every living human.

The long, twilight struggle continues.

Thank you very much for having me here, and I'm happy to take your questions. (Applause.)

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Q -- Mahmoud Abbas is dedicated to fighting terror, yet just a few days ago he announced that he will not arrest or dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. And, indeed, we've seen in the last few days that the terrorists are in control. So under these circumstances, how can the U.S. tell Israel to sit still, not retaliate against the terrorists, not hunt them down? And is there a double standard here for the U.S. and Israel? (Applause.)

DR. RICE: Thank you. First of all, this is the new Palestinian leadership that is in the process of trying to reform and strengthen security services that have, frankly, not been devoted to fighting terror, but have been unaccountable and unwilling to fight terror.

And so there will need to be a period of the strengthening of those security services. And we have encouraged the Palestinians to talk openly with the Israelis about that process, and we are prepared to help, as are other countries in the region, to help the Palestinians to strengthen those security services.

There is not going to be any pass for any Palestinian leadership on fighting terror. It is absolutely the case that this President and this United States government believe that terror, wherever it is found, wherever it is practiced, has got to be rooted out and destroyed. And so there will be no pass on that issue. (Applause.)

It is important that the Israelis and the Palestinians realize, however, that they took a different step at Aqaba from the path that they've been on for a number of years. And the step was to recognize each other as partners in building a Palestinian state, in building a secure Israel and Palestine, in building a new kind of Middle East. And, therefore, as partners, they need to work together, each from their own resources and own perspectives to get the job done against terrorism.

And that is what we're trying to encourage. That is why we're asking that the Palestinians speak out strongly against terror -- and, in fact, they have spoken out against the terror attacks that have taken place. We have told them that they really are going to have to do what they can while they're building their forces to fight terror. And we've asked the Israelis to recognize that there are consequences to the way that they, too, fight terror. (Applause.)

And so the key is to think of this as a partnership in fighting terror. That is the only way that this is going to get done. The future of a stable and secure and peaceful Middle East, the future of a stable and secure Israel and a stable and secure Palestine is to do it together. That's what Aqaba said and that's the course that we are engaged on. (Applause.)

Q My question to you is, what do you think democracy should be?

DR. RICE: I'm sorry, I didn't quite understand.

Q What is your opinion of what democracy should mean?

DR. RICE: Oh, what should democracy mean. It's an excellent, excellent question.

The reason that we hold so dear the notion of democracy is that it is founded on the fundamental premise that people control their own futures. They are not subject to the whims and the arbitrary decisions of those over whom they have no control. It is one of the reasons that one of the most important elements of democracy is that the rule have -- the rulers have to be accountable to those that they rule. It is because no one should have control of your future without your say-so. And so that's the fundamental notion of democracy.

Now, there are important support elements of democracy, including a free press, including the freedom of conscience, including the freedom to worship as one wishes, the freedom to say what one wishes to say and to believe what one wishes to believe. Again, that you have control of your own future, that human dignity is tied up in having no one who can arbitrarily control your life.

In a place like the United States, we have found that democracy is strengthened because not only do we have governmental institutions, separation of powers institutions that protect those basic freedoms, but we have a strong civil society that supports democratic institutions. The Town Hall of Los Angeles is an institution of civil society. It is not a governmental institution, it is a free association of people who come together to discuss the important ideas of the day and, indeed, to influence them by having people like me here.

That kind of institution very often does not exist in new, fledgling democracies. And so what we talk about when we talk to people about building democracy, is that you have to have institutions that protect basic freedoms and basic dignities. But you also have to have a support structure for democracy of the kind that civil society provides.

I would just say one other thing about democracy. It's not easy. Sometimes we talk as if it's just the most natural thing in the world to be tolerant of views that you really hate, that it's just the most natural thing in the world to be tolerant of people who are not like you, that it is just the most natural thing in the world to progress together toward some common vision that sometimes it's actually fairly difficult to define and describe.

And when I'm talking to young democracies, or states that are trying to build democracy, I often find it helpful to remind people that the United States has been at this for better than 220 years -- and there are still some parts of it we're trying to get right. (Applause.) When the founding fathers said, "We, the people," they didn't mean me. My ancestors were three-fifths of a man -- so multi-ethnic democracy isn't easy. (Applause.)

The key is to be devoted to the principles. The key is to keep working at it and to keep trying. And the key to remember to it is to remembering that you have to build democracy brick by brick, day by day -- the work is never finished. (Applause.)

Q One of the issues you talk about in winning the war for peace is the battle for ideas. And it's my understanding recently that in the vacuum of leadership that the control of the radio and the TV within Iraq has been focusing on issues other than building this desire and the knowledge of what a democracy can be.

What are we doing to create a radio-free, a TV-free Iraq that supports some of the vision that you're talking about?

DR. RICE: Thank you for the very excellent question. It's absolutely the case that the ability to reach the Iraqi people through media is extremely important. And it's a task that we are very involved in trying to get there. It is a -- some of it is just a technical problem. I mean, there are still problems with power and the like in many places. Some of it is making sure that it does not appear to just be media, that the United States and the coalition have somehow imposed upon Iraq. They've had enough of that, they don't need that again.

And so we're working with Iraqis to develop media. Now, it's very interesting, when democracy breaks out, all kinds of things start to happen -- all kinds of newspapers are turning up in Iraq -- some of them good from our point of view, some of them not good from our point of view. But people are trying to community.

But you are absolutely right, if you're going to win the war of ideas, you're going to have to do it through modern means. And one of the things that the President recently talked with Jerry Bremer, when he was out in Qatar, talked with him about exactly this. I think, in fact, the second or third question the President asked Ambassador Bremer -- after, "Jerry, how are you doing and how's the security situation?" -- is, "How are you doing on getting those media outlets up and running?" So it's something that's getting the highest level of attention and I couldn't agree with you more.

Q Dr. Rice, this is the second time that I see you speak. The last time I saw you was in March, at the APEC conference in Washington, D.C. And I want to thank you for your sincerity, your insightfulness and your unwavering commitment to a secure and terror-free Israel.

The question I have for you is, it's my understanding that Belgium has just recently afforded itself the right to try citizens of any country for what they consider war crimes. It's my understanding they've already considered charges against an American general, the current Israeli Prime Minister and a past Israeli general.

And I wonder whether you -- whether you consider this to be some sort of a threat or a strategic problem that has to be dealt with? And, if so, what are we doing to deal with it?

DR. RICE: Yes. In fact, we have been very concerned about the Belgian law to which you are referring, and we have taken this up with the Belgian government. It should not be the case that -- a set of unaccountability here about the use of the word "war crime" and using this (inaudible) against all kinds of freely and democratically elected leaders can be countenanced by a democracy and, frankly, a member of NATO and a long-term ally.

And so we have taken it up with the Belgian government. We think it's a very, very bad development and we've let them know that. It is one of the reasons, by the way, that we have been opposed to the International Criminal Court, where you would have unaccountable prosecutors we believe politicizing these issues. And we make the point that the United States and countries like this are democracies, they are capable of dealing with any misdeeds that they think may have been committed. And we do not need instruments of this kind. But we have most certainly taken it up directly with Belgian government; most recently, Colin Powell took it up with his counterpart. And we hope to see movement by the Belgian government. They did make some changes to the law, but we still think that there is more that needs to be done.

Q Dr. Rice, since there seems to be such a tyranny of terror in the Middle East, and there's a lot of hope, but on the other hand it seems that Abbas is really unable to control the terror in Palestine. Do you think the

administration would consider a plan, such as Martin Indyk has suggested, that the United States develop a -- with the European Union, the U.N. and Russia -- develop a trusteeship for the Palestinians so that that trusteeship could hold in trust the Palestinian Authority and the hope for a state while United States special forces support the Palestinians to destroy the tyranny of terror from Hamas, et cetera; and the Israelis withdraw the Israeli's defense forces and the trusteeship take over that law enforcement?

Do you think that's a possibility that the administration would consider, since hope doesn't seem to lead to action? Thank you.

DR. RICE: Well, I think hope will lead to action. We're on the right course, and the right course is to encourage the Palestinian leadership, along with all of its partners -- and that includes an Israeli partner, it includes Arab partners, it includes partners in the EU and the U.N. and the United States -- encourage them to take on the important task of statehood -- fighting terror, having security forces that are accountable, having financial affairs that are transparent, where they've made a lot of progress, and making life better for their own people.

The Palestinian people need new institutions that will lead to a state. I don't think they need a trusteeship. They need control of their own future. I think Aqaba is a course that will get them to control of their own future.

It is also the case that, yes, the situation is very difficult, and it's been a very bad last couple of days. But we believe that the Palestinian leadership, as it is working to make its forces stronger, that there are things that the Palestinian leadership can do. But, frankly, there are also things that others could do. The Arab states need right now, today, to say that Hamas and the other rejectionist organizations -- which have said that they intend to destroy the road map -- are not speaking for the Arab world. That has to be said, and it has to be said clearly. (Applause.)

You can not on the one hand say that you want peace and you want and Palestinian and Israeli state living side by side and not speak out against those who say they're out to destroy that vision. And so you can be certain that the President and Secretary Powell and I and other members of the administration of the U.S. government will be speaking with all of our partners in a very straightforward way to say that, yes, the fighting of terror is the responsibility of the Palestinians, they've got to take that on; the Israelis have responsibilities to give a political horizon that makes sense for the Palestinians. But it's the responsibilities of each and every one of us to fight terror, to de-legitimize terror and to root it out wherever we find it.

Q Thank you, Dr. Rice, for being here, we appreciate your presence.

Two questions, one very quickly. How do we stop the funding and the tracking of finances for Hamas? That's the first question. And number two, and more important to me is, we're in California, we welcome you home, we'd love to see you run and would you please run for California? (Applause.)

DR. RICE: On the first question. (Laughter.) We have a very active program to track terrorist financing. And it is true for the financing of any organization that is on the list of terrorists that the State Department has and we are working very hard on the tracking of Hamas funding. We need help. We need help from the Europeans, we need help from the Arab states.

I think that Hamas has said just this past week they're going to destroy the road map, so now is the time.

The United States -- let me just use it to talk about it a little bit broader. Very early on we recognized that the war on terror was going to be fought on many fronts. Of course we were going to have to use military action to deal with places like Afghanistan, that harbor terror; of course we were going to have to deal with law enforcement and intelligence. But very early on we also recognized that the funding of terrorism had become a very complex web -- some of it direct funding, which is actually the easiest to get at. But as you note, there are a number of front organizations, so-called charities that funnel money to terrorist organizations. And so the United States has been on an active program of dealing with those kinds of problems.

We had a very good discussion with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia when we were in Aqaba -- sorry, in Sharm el-Sheikh, about the need for the Saudis to do more on the funding of terrorism. And they certainly understand that task.

So it's an all-out program to try and deal with terrorist financing. I think it will succeed. It is going to have to have, though, the cooperation of the whole world. And particularly on Hamas, people are going to have to take a hard look at what they're doing and ask if they are prepared to continue to treat Hamas as something other than a terrorist organizations. We already treat it in that way; others should as well.

In terms of my return to California, I'm trying to be National Security Advisor. I think you can tell I've got my hands full right now -- (laughter) -- not really on my radar screen, but I really do look forward to returning to California sometime in the near future. (Applause.)

Q Thank you for being here. We're very proud that you're here and we're thankful for the Town Hall for giving us that opportunity.

I have a question. How does the U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 compare to the results at Aqaba? I understand there's a grave discrepancy as far as the percentages of land?

DR. RICE: Well, Aqaba does not envision any percentages of land. In fact, 242 and 338 are referenced in a number of -- in the road map, itself, but no one has tried to get to discussions of percentages of land. The real breakthrough I think on June 24th was to recognize that some of the fundamentals needed to be in place in order to eventually deal with the long-term final status issues that have been so difficult and have been so bedeviling.

It's very interesting, it was Ariel Sharon recently who said that the time has come to divide this land between Palestinians and Israelis. He said at Aqaba that he understood that it had to be a contiguous and viable Palestinian state. The principles are coming into place that will make it, we believe, not easier, but more possible to resolve some of the longer and more difficult final status issues about final borders.

But final borders is really not the only thing that constitutes a state. And one of the breakthroughs of June 24th was to say to the Palestinians the content of the state, the character of the state is going to be extremely important to getting to a resolution of the final status issues. If it's democratic and transparent and peace-loving and doesn't aid and abet terrorist, that is going to make it much easier to sit down with an Israeli partner and talk about how to divide the land.

And so we believe that there are some fundamentals that need to go forward here. We've got a good process -- process map through the road map. We've got a good vision through the statements that were just made at Aqaba. And we will eventually be able to deal with the final status issues

because you will have partners who have developed some trust, who have developed a working relationship and who can imagine living side by side with each other -- something that is not so easy in the Middle East.

Q Dr. Rice, thank you for being here today. It's been a pleasure listening to you. And I have to say it's so thrilling to see so many horrifying events and tragedies in our country, in the world. Is there any one incident that sticks out in your mind as, like, the time when your heart hurt the most? Or when you were, like, I can't take it anymore? Or just, it's too much to handle? Is there any one incident that you can think of?

DR. RICE: Well, indeed, we have had our share of difficult events. For every American, the planes driving into the World Trade Center towers and into the Pentagon -- I think it was a moment for each and every one of us when we knew that the world had changed forever.

And I will tell you that on the first anniversary of September 11th, we went to several sites with the President - to the field in Pennsylvania, where Flight 93 went down; to the World Trade Center site; to the Pentagon. And at each and every place I was struck by the intensely personal grief of those who had lost people there.

It's very easy to get focused on these as big and historical events. But, of course, they touch individual people very, very deeply. And the people would come up and they would have a picture of a child or a husband and they would say, "I just want somebody to remember what happened here, to my loved one." And very often they would then say, "Can you try and make sure that it doesn't happen again?"

We're doing everything that we can in our power to learn the lessons of what happened to this country on September 11th. And sometimes when we talk to our colleagues and friends around the world, it's important that people understand that life did change forever for Americans. And so did the responsibilities of the United States change forever as a result of September 11th.

We were always the strongest country in the world, and therefore the country most responsible for keeping of peace and security. But after what happened to us on September 11th, I think we also recognized that this complex and difficult enemy that we were fighting required us to mobilize on many more fronts than we had ever been asked to mobilize on before. It asked us to difficult things that are hard for us to do and for others to do.

And it asked us, I think, to renew our desire and to renew our commitment to do what America has perhaps always done -- that is to focus on the hard side, to focus on the security side to make sure that we are tough and never allow the bad guys to think that they're going to go unopposed.

But interestingly for the President, and I think for all of us, it also drew an undeniable link between freedom and security, freedom and peace. Because those who attacked us on September 11th were attacking us for who we are and what we stand for; for the open society that we are, for the tolerant society that we are. Because it's fundamentally different than their vision.

With that renewed recognition that a balance of power that favors freedom, renewed understanding that American values and American interests are inextricable, I think you've seen the emergence of a doctrine and of a policy that is, in that sense, as coherent as any since the end of World War II, when we recognized that same linkage.

But September 11th, it has to be for me the most traumatic circumstance that I've ever found myself in. And I think for America it was a life-changing experience. (Applause.)

Q Good morning. My name is Jason Davis and I'm a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. And you serve as a model of strength and courage for all, thank you. (Applause.)

As the decisions made today impact my future in the Army, particularly those decisions made concerning the Middle East, what are the administration's plans on helping to democratize Iran, particularly bringing them into the fold of more moderate states -- more moderate Islamic states.

DR. RICE: Thank you; yes, right. Well, the Iranian regime needs first and foremost to deal with the aspirations of its own people. And Iran is one of the few places in the Middle East where people have actually had a chance to express what those aspirations are. And when they have an election they express them quite clearly. They are toward pluralism and democratic development -- and that's absolutely clear.

The elected government of Iran, however, has not managed, or does not want to -- I don't know what the full story is -- but has not managed to deliver on that promise and has instead allowed an un-elected few to continue to frustrate the aspirations of the Iranian people.

And so for the United States we have to stand with the aspirations of the Iranian people, which have been clearly expressed. We also have to make very clear to the Iranian government that we cannot tolerate circumstances in which al Qaeda operatives come in and out of Iran. We cannot tolerate circumstances in which Iran, with a different vision of what Iraq ought to look like, tries to stir trouble in southern Iraq. And we must, as an international community, be resolved to say to the Iranians that the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is not acceptable.

There's an IAEA report, International Atomic Energy Agency report that will soon come out. All of the indications are that Iran has been doing precisely what the United States has thought that it was doing, which is using its advanced technology, its advanced know-how to do under its civilian nuclear programs things that could lead to a nuclear weapons program. That's just unacceptable. And the Iranians are going to have to come to terms with that, and the international community is going to have to come to terms with that.

But you're right, Iran is a key piece in the Middle East. But we do believe that if you have a stable and democratic Afghanistan and a stable and democratic Iraq, and if you can associate with the aspirations of the Iranian people, which are clearly toward democratic development, that sooner or later the Iranian leadership is going to have to listen.

Thank you very much, and thanks for being here. (Applause.)

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